

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.\*

ANCIENT AND MODERN TALES OF COURAGE.  
HEROIC HAPPENINGS. Told in Verse and Story. By Elbridge S. Ellis. With Illustrations by George F. Ogle, Merrile, Slinger and others. Pp. 357. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

The heroic short poem has been done to perfection by Macaulay. One may therefore dismiss much that is written in this volume without a word; for it is Macaulay's metrical contrivance applied to themes of which Macaulay knew nothing. When it comes to a wanton destruction of life, it matters little whether the hero who dies is a Custer or an Herkules, or a Louis Grangier. It matters little whether his self-sacrifice means the salvation of his country or its destruction. What he does is to be judged in itself and by itself. The world is unquestionably bettered by these acts of heroism, but then the world is easily wearied, and it is an annoyance to Tom, Dick, and Harry to be told what some exceptional human being has done. Some of Mr. Brooks's stories are a literal repetition of history, but Rawlinson to the contrary notwithstanding, his version of the war between the Egyptians and the Khetas is pure nonsense. Such an affair, the contest between a king in a chariot single-handed and 2,500 chariots of an enemy's army, could never have happened. The poet Pantar simply did a wonderfully good thing for him self. As a man of letters he gained the practical support of the King. Cunoes II., which doubtless means as much to him as it did to a poet in the mediæval period of kicks, cuffs and a supper with the servants of some vulgar lord in the mediæval and modern period of Europe. The world must never be allowed to forget the pit out of which it has been dug. The digging has in general been done by the literary men who have done better for their patrons than the patrons deserved. Pantar and Ramees are excellent examples of the way literature and royalty have got along together from that day to this. Literature has to don cap and bells and make a melancholy spectacle of itself to get on with any sort of domination from ignorance.

There is, in fact, only one case where the author of this volume has any prejudice in favor of his own story. The poem of Mrs. Hemans about the boy who stood on the burning deck when all but him had fled is, as he views it, totally untrue. The father did not leave the boy to perish alone. The tradition in the Corsican family of Casablanca is that the son, instead of being deserted by his father and the rest of the ship's crew, found his father determined to stay by the ship, and in spite of all entreaties and remonstrances shared his fate. In Mrs. Hemans's version of the tale, the mangled, lifeless body of the elder Casablanca can give no response when the loyal son asks for permission to move from inevitable death to safety. But the legend in the Casablanca family is that nothing of the sort happened. The boy endeavored to persuade his father to leave the ship, and when the wounded captain showed his resolution to go down with the vessel which he had commanded, clung to him as only a dutiful son could.

The antique and the modern are mingled—one might say "sandwiched"—in this volume. One of the best and most realistic bits of description is that which pertains to the adventure of a little Irish lad who saves the lives of other children at the risk of his own. The incident might happen at almost any watering place; but the trouble is that it would happen in most cases without any Duke Donoughue to the rescue. The author has managed by coating his themes to present pictures of the old Spanish rule in America, of the crusading period, of old Egyptian times, of Roman naval life, of an Imperial Roman festival, of colonial times in Maine and the Middle Atlantic States, of mediæval castle warfare, and of the era of Columbian discovery. The stories are cleverly told, but with a tinge too much of that self-conscious eloquence which led Miss Porter and General Wallace to say "turn we now," when they did not turn, and their readers were so averse to turning that the very effort has always caused a stomachic revolution. The first paragraph in this book is, in fact, almost intolerable from the point of view of common sense.

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